

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

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**Governor Schweitzer Announces Formation of Council on Economic Security for Montana Families**

(HELENA) – Governor Brian Schweitzer today announced the formation of the Governor’s Council on Economic Security for Montana Families. “To continue to grow Montana, we must ensure all Montana families share in the growth and wealth many families already enjoy,” Governor Schweitzer said.

The new council takes the place of several existing councils in a continuing effort to promote efficiency and effectiveness in state government. Members will seek advice from Montanans on strategies to improve Montana families’ long-term economic situation and enable them to become self-sufficient.

“We want to identify approaches for hard working families to achieve financial security,” said Governor Schweitzer. “Families are the cornerstones of communities. The stronger families are, the stronger our communities are – and the stronger Montana becomes.”

The council will report the directly to the Governor, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Labor and Industry, the Department of Public Health and Human Services and the Office of Economic Development on effective strategies to alleviate poverty and eliminate or reduce barriers faced by families in achieving economic stability and financial literacy.

Members of the Governor’s Economic Security Advisory Council for Montana Families include:

Minkie Medora, Missoula, Chair

Medora is a registered dietitian and a licensed nutritionist and has a MS degree from the University of Rhode Island in food and nutrition. She serves as a board member for the Montana Food Bank Network.

Rep. Shannon Augare, Browning

Augare, a state legislator, works for Montana Consumer Credit Counseling in Great Falls, a nonprofit organization which provides financial counseling and education. He is active in community affairs, serving on a number of boards.

Lori Brengle, Glendive

Brengle is the director for the Area I Agency on Aging. She served as a delegate to the White House Conference on Aging and is the past president of the Montana Gerontology Society.

Mary Danford, Kalispell

Danford works in education and job training with Montana PEAKS. She is a member of National Women Work, Business and Professional Women and the US Department of Labor's apprenticeship and training technical assistance team.

Everall Fox, Billings

Fox is the Indian education coordinator for the Billings Public Schools. He holds a master's degree in education from the University of Montana.

Sheila Hogan, Clancy

Hogan is the executive director of the Career Training Institute. She is a member of the Economic Development Advisory Council, the TANF Block Grant Advisory Group and an executive board member for National Women Work.

Bethany Letiecq, Bozeman

Letiecq is a professor at Montana State University in the Department of Health and Human Services. She holds a PhD in family studies/health from the University of Maryland.

Barbara Stiffarm, Havre

Stiffarm is the development director for Opportunity Links. She has also served with an American Indian-owned consulting firm located on the Rocky Boys Reservation, and as the tribal planner/community block grant coordinator for the Fort Belknap Indian Community Council.

Elaine Topsky, Havre

Topsky is the program director of the Chippewa Cree Tribal TANF on the Rocky Boy Reservation. She holds an MA degree in counseling from Northern Montana College and is also an educator.

Angie Wasia, Bozeman

Wasia is the part-time bookkeeper for the family business and a local pre-school. She was the human resource director for Zoot Enterprise, and served on the Job Service Employers Committee. She has a bachelor's degree from MSU and a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin.

Robert Young, Bozeman

Young is the founder and executive director of the Red Feather Development Group and has overseen the successful completion of 53 reservation-based housing projects. He has a BA in political science from the University of Washington.

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